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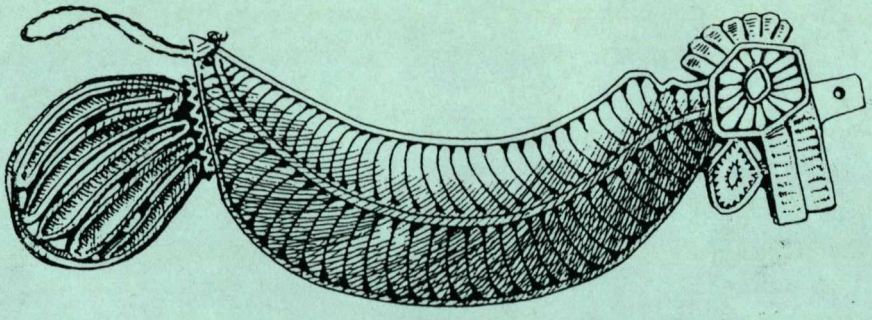
EAST TIMOR

STATEMENT TO THE UN DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE

NEW YORK, 7 AUGUST 1991



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The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

Statement on East Timor
to the UN Decolonisation Committee, 7 August 1991
by
TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

Mr. Chairman and honourable members,

On behalf of **TAPOL**, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, I want to thank you for this opportunity to petition your Committee about East Timor.

Our organisation has monitored developments in East Timor since the Indonesian invasion in 1975. I would like to highlight recent developments in East Timor, looking at some features of Indonesian rule and occupation.

The effects of 'opening up'

Ever since East Timor was 'opened-up' by the Indonesian authorities at the end of 1988, or, to use the other euphemism, 'brought into line with other provinces', the flow of information has improved. This is one of the few positive results of 'opening-up'; otherwise, nothing has changed. East Timor is an Indonesian colony and a project of the Indonesian armed forces.

'Opening-up' was initiated and endorsed by President Suharto as a move to polish the image of East Timor abroad. But the Indonesian military and police, who are responsible for security and order in East Timor, have never been happy with the move and continue with their normal activities. An Irish journalist who visited East Timor as a tourist this year witnessed the arrival and departure of Indonesian troops. Thanks to 'opening-up', outsiders have seen evidence of troop movements and military operations which were formerly easier to hide.

In contrast to former days, recent visitors who have entered as tourists have enjoyed greater freedom of movement and less control at military check-points. Those visitors who have made a point of contacting local people, confirm that the vast majority of East Timorese are staunchly in favour of national independence. Such visits have been used by the Timorese to channel reports of human rights abuses, arrests and torture.

But official visits have been carefully supervised. When a delegation of Australian parliamentarians visited East Timor earlier this year, they were "continuously supervised by a number of military, intelligence and Government officials wherever we travelled." They were informed by Bishop Belo that "a number of leaders of the resistance movement had been rounded up

and imprisoned before our arrival. We had expected a demonstration to occur... but the presence of security forces was so heavy that I was not surprised that none occurred." [Mr G.D. Gibson, MHR, in *Daily House Hansard*, 17 April 1991] Yet even so, Timorese resistance activists managed to hand documents to the Australians from the resistance as well as a written statement about torture. Abilio Mesquita, a student, wrote about his arrest and maltreatment in October for involvement in demonstrations. During interrogation, he was stripped naked, given electric shocks and beaten everywhere with an iron rod, and suffered a broken jaw. The MPs observed that the youth were leading a new wave of protests against Indonesian rule in the towns.

Thanks to the 'opening-up', it was also possible for the Australian lawyer Robert Domm to enter East Timor as a tourist last September and meet the guerrilla leader, Xanana Gusmao in the mountainous interior. This encounter took months to prepare and resulted in a unique interview with Xanana. It symbolised the end of fifteen years of isolation for the East Timor resistance in the bush. Robert Domm's trip would not have been possible without the help of hundreds of Timorese in the towns and villages. According to Domm, the organised resistance exists everywhere - in the towns, in the tiniest villages, even at the top of the Indonesian administration.

East Timorese resistance is no longer confined to armed resistance. The 'opening-up' has facilitated the emergence of political resistance in the towns, along with a new defiance among East Timorese students living and studying in different parts of Indonesia, particularly in Java and Bali.

Activists in East Timor have used several occasions to show their defiance of Indonesian rule. A visit by US ambassador John Monjo in January 1990 was used to highlight East Timor's demand for self-determination. Incidents in several secondary schools in September and October 1990 were an unmistakable sign of a vibrant political movement amongst the youth. The Indonesian flag was torn and anti-Indonesian slogans were written on the walls. The incidents were reported by the foreign media because the clandestine front sent information out. The October events were recorded by a group of diplomats who happened to be visiting East Timor at the time.

Thanks to greatly improved channels of communication, East Timor solidarity groups have received many detailed reports about Indonesian military operations, human rights abuses and political detainees, along with an impressive collection of photographs.

The East Timorese resistance movement has adjusted well to the new circumstances provided by the 'opening-up', developing new ways to express their political aspirations. But conditions for the East Timorese have not changed. People's fear of retribution by the security forces dominate everyday

life and the freedom to travel are still very restricted. The defection of four Timorese soccer players during a tour to Australia in May this year recalls the days of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall when people fled to the west.

'Opening up' has placed the security forces on the horns of a dilemma. The policy serves an important purpose in the world of diplomacy as it gives the impression that Indonesia is fully in control and has nothing to hide. This has obliged the security forces to adopt a hearts-and-minds policy, the persuasive approach rather than the repressive approach. With outsiders present, they must avoid too much open confrontation, a kind of kid-glove 'management' of daily life. At army headquarters in Dili, there is a large drawing of a soldier slapping a Timorese youngster in the face, above which are written the words: "No beating." But the reality is different, especially at times when people tear up the Indonesian flag and show their defiance in other ways. Then the gloves are off and things go back to arrests, beatings and other atrocities. At moments like this, the security forces must act, regardless of whether tourists or other observers are there to see.

Switch of emphasis

It is a fact that Indonesian security and intelligence officers know a lot about the strategies and tactics of the resistance, from captured documents and from information extracted during the interrogation and torture of captured guerrillas. But it is equally true that many Indonesian military documents fall into the hands of the East Timorese resistance. Both sides monitor and adjust their strategies accordingly. These intelligence leaks also help us to assess developments inside. Allow me to share some of these observations with you.

The Indonesian military operation conducted throughout 1990 is called *Operasi Moris Diak II*. We know from documents we have been able to examine that *Operasi Moris Diak II* was aimed at capturing the leadership of the resistance, in particular Xanana Gusmao. It is a counter-insurgency operation involving the deployment of crack troops, an opportunity for training in this, for Indonesia, new strategy of counter-insurgency. The operation has been waged continually since early 1990. Unlike previous military operations that have tended to last 6 to 8 weeks, deploying a wide variety of Indonesian territorial troops, the present operation uses from two to three thousand Indonesian commandos that are constantly on the move. The commandos live like guerillas, setting up bivouacs of their own and roaming the hilly countryside, hunting for guerillas. At certain moments of intensity, more territorial troops are sent in to back up the counter-insurgency troops, reinforcing the army's presence in the villages and resettlement camps.

The Timorese resistance sustained heavy losses in September and

October 1990 when several close aides of Xanana Gusmao were killed in battle. Despite the difficulties, *Falintil*, the armed wing of the resistance, has managed to maintain its structure with four regional units.

The resistance has restructured their organisation to give greater focus to the political movement or clandestine front in the towns. The political leadership of the resistance has remained intact and the new structure is geared towards waging campaigns in the cities, including Indonesian cities where many Timorese are studying at university.

There has also be some restructuring on the Indonesian side. The counter-insurgency operations are under the control of *Kolakops*, the new operational command created when *Koopskam* which was disbanded in December 1989. The secrecy that covers the military operations in East Timor makes it difficult to assess the difference between the two commands, but one thing we do know is that the commander of *Korem*, the regional military command in East Timor, which is in charge of territorial control, is concurrently commander of *Kolakops*. Under the old structure, the *Koopskam* command was held by a more senior officer. Hence, though korem commanders are colonels elsewhere, in East Timor, the post is held by Brigadier-General Rudy Warouw. The deployment of troops from several crack armed forces units means that the operation involves some direct control from Jakarta. In other words, the disbandment of *Koopskam* has not altered the fact that East Timor has a special military structure to deal with a very special security situation. Instead of warfare formerly waged by *Koopskam*, we have the *Moris Diak* counter-insurgency operations.

The day-to-day territorial management, also under Brig.Gen. Rudy Warouw, takes what is called the 'prosperity approach' to win hearts and minds, geared to creating the impression that the army is 'one and united' with the East Timorese people. Territorial soldiers who enter the villages to repair fences, build bridges, resolve community problems and so on, do not wear battle gear. Often the soldiers get involved in agricultural activities to impose Javanese farming methods on the Timorese. Such methods are a standard part of counter-insurgency tactics to pacify the population. Whatever the intentions, the troops treat the 'locals' as backward people, a typical colonial and racist attitude that most Indonesians adopt towards the East Timorese.

This two-pronged strategy, the soft approach in the villages and towns and the ruthless hunt for guerillas, does not always run smoothly. The upsurge in the towns means that the 'soft' territorial approach cannot cope with the new situation. The Timorese youth have displayed a rebelliousness comparable to the Palestinian youth in the Occupied Territories, pestering soldiers, throwing stones at military vehicles, puncturing tires and burning down

Indonesian market-places.

Many Timorese youngsters have ended up in jail after being beaten up in interrogation centres. In the past twelve months, we have received many detailed reports about arrests in East Timor, invariably without warrant. Military garrisons and special houses are used for detention and interrogation and relatives are not informed of the whereabouts of the detainees.

The arrests in October and November 1990 were not confined to the youth. Among those detained were civil servants, including a former member of the provincial parliament and a member of the Governor's staff. In July this year, seven people were arrested in Baucau, of whom four were members of a special team of *Hansip*, the civil guard. Arrests often take place after midnight when people are dragged out of their beds. Many of those arrested are suspected of having clandestine links with the armed resistance.

No clear pattern has emerged as to whether those under arrest are held for a few weeks or months of detention then released or tried in court. Information indicates that some of the many political prisoners now being held in Comarca-Dili Prison were tried. A 'trial' in East Timor is usually nothing more than a one-day affair, with no proper defence. The judge passes sentence without going through the usual procedures of hearing witnesses and allowing the defendant to speak in her/his own defence.

Indonesian management is also geared towards the Timorisation of the war, recruiting Timorese as conscripts or paramilitaries. The strategy is partially successful because jobs are scarce in East Timor. A job in the army provides a regular salary and other facilities. It is unlikely that the motivation of the Timorese conscripts is high, especially when thrown into battle with Timorese compatriots. Hence the majority of counter-insurgency troops roaming the countryside are Indonesian soldiers.

The myth of Indonesian development

Indonesian officials, civilian and military alike, blame the wave of disturbances on social and economic problems, particularly on the frustration of young people who have attended Indonesian schools but fail to find jobs. No-one hides the fact that unemployment is rampant in East Timor while efforts to attract capital from outside have failed. On paper, East Timor is shown in the Indonesian state budget as having a long list of development projects worth Rp. 139,034 billion (about US$70 million). But recently Governor Mario Carrascalao complained that "irregularities, malfeasance and leakages of funds provided by the central government had been rampant". Visitors to East Timor record seeing many half-built projects or sites with battered boards announcing a project. Even casual observers have noticed that virtually

all economic activities are in the hands of non-Timorese (Indonesians), the shops, the restaurants, the hotels, the taxis. The few jobs that become available are snapped up by Indonesian workers. The number of Indonesians now living in East Timor is steadily increasing; exact figures are hard to come by but some sources say that there are already 150,000 new settlers out of a total population of 700,000.

Peasant farmers from all parts of Indonesia have taken up government offers of cheap, fertile land. Landownership in East Timor is becoming an explosive issue, with the Timorese being dispossessed of their traditional land. In the early years of the Indonesian annexation, almost the entire Timorese population was uprooted and resettled. Since last year, Timorese villagers have gradually been allowed back to their traditional regions, but not necessarily to their traditional plots. For security reasons the new Timorese resettlement villages are situated near the main roads, while the traditional villages often lie in more remote areas near the water sources and fertile land.

Following the upheavals of the late seventies, much arable land was left uncultivated. Land registration from the Portuguese period must now give way to Indonesian law, to the disadvantage of the Timorese who often cannot produce any legal proof of land ownership apart from their traditional claim. The Indonesian authorities are encouraging people from elsewhere to start a new life in East Timor, with the result that the East Timorese are being swamped by new Indonesian settlers.

As for unemployment, a new scheme has been devised, to send young East Timorese to Java to work in factories. The scheme has the endorsement of the Indonesian government and is financed by *Yayasan Tiara*, a foundation owned by President Suharto's eldest daughter, Tutut Hardijanto Rukmana. Though given promises of vocational training and good salaries, several hundred Timorese have found themselves being exploited as cheap labour on a factory assembly-line. The Timorese resistance sees this as a ploy to get rid of the hard core of demonstrators and end the wave of rebellion in the towns.

Mr. Chairman and honourable members of the commission,

East Timor has been on the agenda of this Committee since 1975 but little has been achieved in pushing forward the process of decolonisation in East Timor. In places like Namibia, the process has been completed while the Western Sahara and Eritrea are nearing a just solution. Peace has been restored in Angola and moves towards peace are under way in Mozambique and Cambodia. The cold war has ended and there is a sense of optimism that global problems will be solved in a peaceful and principled way, without the

double standards used in the past.

The time for peace talks has come for East Timor. Xanana Gusmao, the leader of the East Timorese resistance, has called for a ceasefire and declared his willingness to negotiate without pre-conditions, under the auspices of the United Nations. The Secretary-General should convene a meeting between the different parties, Indonesia, Portugal and representatives of the East Timorese people. The international atmosphere is now ripe for a solution to one of the last remaining colonies on this globe.

We thank you.
New York 7 August 1991